

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4399

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0167

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJECT: ADWA DAY CELEBRATION

1. THE EPMG-SPONSORED CELEBRATION OF THE VICTORY IN 1896 OF THE ETHIOPIANS OVER THE ITALIANS AT ADWA WAS CARRIED OUT IN ASMARA MORE OR LESS ACCORDING TO SCHEDULE. IN THE RECENT PAST THIS ANNIVERSARY WAS A SIMPLE NON-WORKING HOLIDAY. THIS YEAR, HOWEVER, THERE WAS AN ELABORATE, FORMAL CELEBRATION WHICH IS WIDELY BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN MOTIVATED BY THE EPMG'S DESIRE TO RE-INSTILL A SENSE OF PATRIOTISM AMONG ETHIOPIANS IN THE FACE OF SPREADING FACTIONALISM.

2. THE FESTIVITIES IN ASMARA FOCUSED ON THE MASS RALLY AT THE
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QUEEN OF SHEBA STADIUM. UNDER MASSIVE SECURITY PRECAUTIONS, THE STANDARD SEQUENCE OF FORMALITIES WAS STAGED, WITH THE ONLY DEVIATION FROM THE PATTERN OF THE REVOLUTION DAY (SEPT 13) CEREMONY BEING ONE OF THEM. THERE WERE REFERENCES TO ETHIOPIA HAVING THWARTED ITALIAN IMPERIALISM AT ADWA, BUT THAT IMPERIALISM IS AGAIN A THREAT TO ETHIOPIA. SPECIFIC MENTION WAS MADE TO THE ERITREAN SEPARATISTS WHO HAVE BEEN LED ASTRAY BY ARAB IMPERIALISTS AND

SUPPORTED BY SUDAN'S PRESIDENT NUMEIRI. THERE WERE NO REFERENCES TO "WESTERN IMPERIALISM" OR THE CIA.

3. THE CEREMONY AT THE STADIUM WAS NOTEWORTHY ONLY IN ITS ESCALATION OF THE MILITARY ASPECT OF THE CELEBRATION. IN ADDITION TO THE VOLUMINOUS SECURITY FORCE IN THE AREA OF THE STADIUM, CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR FIKRU SWEPT INTO THE STADIUM BEHIND EIGHT MOTORCYCLE POLICEMEN AND TWO MACHINEGUN JEEPS, AND FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER MACHINEGUN JEEP AND A TRUCKLOAD OF TROOPS. DURING THE FOUR SPEECHES, THERE WERE ALSO REPEATED FLYPASTS BY TWO CAMOUFLAGED F-86 FIGHTERS.

4. COMMENT: ALL IN ALL THE ADWA DAY CEREMONIES GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE EPMG IS STILL ABLE TO MOBILIZE THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS AND KEBELES, AND TO GIVE THE SEMBLANCE AT LEAST OF UNITY AND STRENGTH IN ERITREA.
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